

Educational Technology Leadership Master's Program: The Last Step

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### **Educational Technology Leadership Master's Program: The Last Step**

A comprehensive look into a summation of the last eighteen months of study is included in this examination. It is my sincere hope that the time invested during my studies, researching, viewing, developing and sharing are properly shared with you and others. I plan to share with you my position and leadership goals created during this endeavor, but I would also like to share many of my experiences along the way. Additionally, there are many reflections of several of the courses but I would also like to present my favorite courses, too. At the conclusion of this examination, I will present to you a three year professional development plan for myself.

### **Position and Leadership Goals**

#### **Position Goal**

Leadership is a big word and comes with many different overtones. One can be a leader of anything at anytime but it means very little if no one follows you. My current position at Region 5 Education Service Center is to be a leader of our department, in other words, I am the director, manager, supervisor and decision maker. I have had the pleasure of performing this role for the past number of years and look forward to many more. The position came with many responsibilities, and the experience of a strong background allowed me to easily fall into the role, but that has changed over the last two years. The world around us has changed drastically in regards to technology and in order to keep up with the changes and maintain my success as a director, I felt it was necessary to grow as an individual. This program was perfect for me to use as a means to reach the knowledge level I felt I needed and to be an avid technology leader. I enrolled in the program to grow and that has truly happened. I feel empowered to do more, reach for more and plan more for the future. As far as future employment goes, I am not certain at this

time if I would change positions. I am very happy with where I work and the job duties of the position I hold. Currently, the work I do is my passion and I do not want to give that up.

### **Leadership Goal**

As I mentioned above, the word leadership embodies many overtones and was a small part of the reason I decided to return to college. The technology area selection was driven by the position I currently hold at Region 5 Education Service Center as a director in the School Management Software Department, under the technology division. The personal motivation was driven by the desire to show my sons and nieces that education is primary in the success of their future. This is my twenty-ninth year to serve in the administrative area of education. The time spent in this field has opened many doors and opportunities to work with children and adults in church and work related activities. I can honestly say with sound conviction that the personal motivation was greater than the educational motivation due solely to being able to be an example for those close to my heart.

The benefits of participating in this program have far exceeded my expectations. The benefits have given me the ability to speak in current technical terms and, participate in extra technology activities at work and personally. I have also already accomplished goals in my leadership role due to this program. The position I currently hold has changed and this program has provided the tools needed to accomplish the new duties. I have also acquired additional technology skills in the past eighteen months. The product we support at the Region 5 Education Service Center was previously client based and has now moved to a web based version. So the benefits I have gained are significant for me as a director. Even greater still, upon the completion of this masters program, I will be more marketable as I retire in the future and hope to work part-time as a consultant.

The personal growth, experience, gained knowledge and acquiring of new technology tools are more than I could have ever hoped for. It is with a very humble attitude that I end this program and move into a newer, fresher aspect of who I am and what I would like to be in the future. Being able to share this with my sons and nieces has been such an incredible opportunity. The greater opportunity, in my opinion, is to serve as an advocate for higher education achievement.

### **Vision of Educational Technology**

Recently, one single device has substantially changed our life style. The device is called an *iPad*. I received this *iPad* as a work instrument. Prior to receiving the device, I had to attend a mandatory training session. The training was very general and addressed the setup steps to receive work and personal email. It was also linked to my current *iTunes* account and a synchronization process was completed to personalize the device. As I left the training room with my brand new work device, I was excited about the potential resources available. My excitement was short lived as I entered my office and began to take an in-depth look at the device. A number of misunderstandings on my part caused my disappointment. I did not realize the device did not come with internet. I did not realize I would not be able to work on Microsoft Office products. I did not realize I would not be able to connect the device to a projector for presentations. I did not realize I would not be able to share the device with co-workers. But, in all of the negative points made above I must mention there were several positive points to convince me otherwise. I soon learned to enjoy so many features on the *iPad* that I was able to look beyond the “*could not*” and into the “*I can*” possibilities.

My continued experience with the *iPad* is mirrored in the *2011 Horizon Report*. The *Horizon Report* gives six emerging technologies or practices that are likely to enter mainstream

use within three adoption horizons during the next five years (Johnson, Smith, Willis, Levine, & Haywood, 2011). Technologies included are: electronic books, mobiles, Augmented Reality (AR), game-based learning, gesture-based computing and learning analytics (Johnson et al., 2011). As I read this report, it became very apparent that technology is growing and moving into many different areas. Areas we once considered only educational are now taking a spin towards interaction and fun. On the other hand, areas we once considered just for fun are now taking a spin towards educational benefits. Each of the six technologies mentioned above are currently used by someone in my family. This is absolutely astounding to consider the advantages technology is providing users throughout the world.

My vision of educational technology is one filled with each of the technologies mentioned above. As a mother of boys, I would love to see augmented reality, game-based learning and gesture-based computing in the classroom. The teacher would be an expert in the area of technology skills and in-depth knowledge of designing curriculum to merge the two in a perfect classroom setting. As an administrator, I would love to see electronic books and mobile devices that would enhance student access to tools needed for reading, research activities and social activities. As a parent and stake-holder, I would love to see learning analytics available to revise curricula, teaching, and assessment in real time.

Teachers are the key role players to making education fun and interactive. Integrating technology into the classroom is an ongoing task facing many technology leaders. I feel as each year passes and a new wave of teachers move into the education system we will be closer to realizing this goal. An example is utilizing distance learning for reading. One of our consultants is currently conducting reading over the distance learning system. Her success in using the new technology is receiving attention and creating a desire for others to follow her example. As a

technology leader, I must model for others the implementation of new technologies. I need to spend more time learning the advantages on using my *iPad* and the tools offered. Some teachers have successfully merged curriculum and technology in the classroom. They have brought technology into their classrooms providing an opportunity to differentiate instruction and change their classrooms into dynamic learning environments (Pitler, Hubbell, Kuhn, & Malenoski, 2007). As a mother, administrator, parent and stake-holder I would love to have this teacher teaching my two sons, two grandsons, five nieces and two nephews.

### **Self-Awareness**

Participating in this program has made me keenly aware of the many educational roles I serve. A few of the roles are personal as they relate to family members in the education system. Other roles correspond with community service and work duties. Regardless of the area, the focus is based on life applications of understanding that generally, the higher level of education you achieve, the higher the wages you receive. I have never thought of myself as one easily swayed by money or social status. Money was not in abundance during my childhood nor latter years. Most of my family did not attend college, so the social status was relegated to church and work friendships. As I reflect upon what I have learned about myself during this program, several experiences stand out as monumental. I was very insecure about participating in this program. I did not receive my bachelor's degree until my forties. During college work, I strived to achieve the best grade possible. My oldest son was attending college at the same time and helped me constantly. At one point, he mentioned that everyone in the class was going to hate me because I busted the grading curve. At a point in this program, someone commented on the amount of time I spent on classwork. I countered with, so far I have a one hundred average in the course and I was striving to maintain the grade. He asked if I knew what a student received

from the university if they made a grade of seventy. When I did not reply he replied with, “they receive a master’s degree”. Both of these comments have fueled the fire for me during this program. I learned that setting and achieving individual goals paved the course for striving for perfection in other areas. The desire to strive helped me to gain much more from this program than I could have dreamed possible.

During one of our readings by Pensky (2001), he pointed out the differences between Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants. My son is definitely a Digital Native and I am certainly a Digital Immigrant. Even in this scenario, I learned something new about myself. I can be labeled and I can change that label. Every day I see children labeled in our school systems and they never seem to shake that label. This program has empowered me to offer tools in the classroom setting that will change those labels. More importantly, I can help change the labels of teachers from a digital immigrant with an accent to one that can lose the accent (Pensky, 2001). My efforts have made a difference for my family and me; I can also make a difference for the students and teachers I encounter.

A tough lesson to learn during this program was how little I knew about technology in today’s society. Prior to the program I felt I was using the latest and greatest web 2.0 tools. Additionally, I felt I was a really solid director of our department. I was wrong on both accounts. I had a lot to learn about technology but I had even more to learn about being a leader in the technology field. I will discuss later in this paper my favorite courses during the program. Some of those courses were vital to the changes I made as a director. The practice during this program enhanced my technology skills significantly and supported those changes.

Coming into this program, I had cultivated a number of personal opinions regarding education, technology, the teaching field and leadership. None of the previous opinions still

stand. I have had to change the attitude in which I viewed many different areas of my life. This program allowed me to gain personal knowledge and growth in areas untouched. With the knowledge and growth, I am a bigger person with more understanding and the ability to step back and view issues and people through different eyes.

I had so many resources and so much support during this program that it literally takes my breath away to recall the moments they were available. The moments that really take my breath away are the ones when I relied on God to take me one more step, one more day, one more week and one more course. Some people say God is not in the miracle making business any longer. Well I can tell you with solid conviction that He is. Not only does He perform miracles but He can bail you out in a moment. I prayed about this program prior to applying because I wanted it to be something I could pass on to my children. I wanted to be better for my family and be able to provide more. I wanted to be an example of working hard for something and achieving that goal. By the Grace of God, I feel confident all these are now a reality. The old song, *To God Be the Glory* is so fitting for me. In Him, I give all credit and Thanksgiving. My favorite Bible verse is Philippians 4:13. "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13 New International Version). Christ is my strength. I am so grateful and blessed to have Him as my Savior.

### **Beneficial Courses**

The eleven courses taken during this program were very beneficial in many ways. Some of the courses provided information in areas that were applicable to my current position at Region 5 Education Service Center. Other courses were either not as beneficial or did not apply directly to my job duties. However, each course presented a new series of experiences throughout the program. Those experiences have become valuable to me as a director. My title



at Region 5 ESC is Director of School Management Software. The department has the responsibility to support administrative software covering student management, business operations and PEIMS processing. My affiliation with the software started almost 28 years ago. My first years were spent at East Chambers ISD in Winnie, TX as a systems operator. After ten years, I began working at the service center. My position at the service center began as an interface specialist supporting the software with a promotion to director several years ago.

### **Information Systems Management**

The course most beneficial to me was *Information Systems Management*. This course is the exact picture of the three positions I have held over the last 28 years. My tenure speaks of experience but the course gave me useful information and exposure to new material. I could not begin to explain the differences between a systems operator 28 years ago compared to now. I can tell you how I can relate so much clearer to the experiences after taking this course. I entered this course with enthusiasm but also gained knowledge about a topic I thought I knew well. Having colleagues in this area helped to compare new ideas and concepts. I am very excited to take the experience and the new gained knowledge and apply them to my daily work.

### **Fundamentals of Educational Technology**

The second course I found to be beneficial was *Fundamentals of Educational Technology*. Serving in the administrative capacity has kept me from being connected to the instructional side of education. This course connected the two worlds for me in several ways. I am not a teacher so I do not have experience in the classroom setting but I provide training to teachers. The knowledge gained during this course provided the technology techniques used to improve instruction and learning. I was out of my comfort zone during this course. There were many times when I did not know the terminology nor the topic discussed. I had to research and

rely on teachers to help me understand the information. The experience of learning the new terminology and spending time with teachers has already helped at work. The future development of our software includes teachers, parents, students and stakeholders. I know I am only seeing the first of many advantages to taking this course and learning about educational technology.

### **Digital Graphics**

*Digital Graphics* is another course that was very beneficial. The course focused on skills needed for visual communications. Traditional and digital environments were covered during design and animation. The skills I learned during this course were applied during a project. During the development stage of our new product, I wanted to use graphics to define our department. Learning how to design a graphic for our logo was interesting. The techniques and the creativity were foreign to me but I was able to use the internet to search for examples. Colleagues also shared their logos which gave me ideas and also shared how they accomplished their design. The new skills learned during this course will be used in many different areas.

### **Web Design and Development**

The fourth most beneficial course was *Web Design and Development*. During the planning, programming and development of our new web-based product, we constantly researched and reviewed policy and procedures. This course helped me tremendously by covering the areas of Web site design, development and site administration. Our web-based product would be affected by many different elements compared to the client-based version. More importantly was learning about project management. The management of our product development and timeline was very important to the launch of our new product. In the final weeks of this course we launched our new site and this provided an insight into what I was

facing with our software project. In the future, I will strive for learning more about developing a timeline and project management, prior to taking on a new project.

### **Teaching with Technology**

*Teaching with Technology* was the most informative course during this program. As I mentioned earlier I am not a teacher. That makes the instructional side of educational technology foreign to me. This course allowed me to experience learning theories and using technology to enhance learning. It showcased strategies and best practices for the greatest impact on student achievement. I knew going into the course I would be challenged during the assignments. I was not familiar with student-centered learning. I asked teachers in our community to show me the technique. I walked away knowing more about the techniques and this will also help during the design of teacher professional development trainings.

### **Multimedia Video Technology**

The sixth course I found most beneficial was *Multimedia Video Technology*. In the past, I have created a couple of small videos with music and photos. I really thought I did a great job on both, but this course made me realize I did not. When I started making the videos I did not develop a plan. The course taught me about planning, design, production and editing. All of these skills were of great interest to me as we plan to implement video training sessions for our new product. The knowledge gained from this course will allow me to lead our team to producing quality training material. Working with colleagues on this project presented a new set of skills. The skills needed to work in a group developing and producing the video was trying at times. The one item most surprising was waiting on someone else on the team. Most of my tasks at work are individual projects and this was something new for me. In the future I will make certain I delegate tasks to people based on skills and responsibility levels. Additionally, it

will be vitally important to develop a timeline and hold all participants to due dates. The success of the entire project depends on everyone.

### **Overall Program**

As I present closing thoughts and reflections of my overall degree program experience, many different experiences, quotes, videos, readings and discussions come to mind. There are so many that it becomes difficult to organize my thoughts in a manner befitting this experience. I would like to describe my experience using several areas. The current economy, improving educational opportunities, working towards the future, the importance of the standards, the digital divide, and sharing are the areas addressed.

### **Economy**

I feel the best place to start is with today's economy and the current happenings in education. I realize you may be thinking this is a very gloomy topic to address and you would be correct. The very process taking place at this time is a critical debate concerning education in America. This debate is ongoing as stated in the 2007 comments of Solomon and Schrum. We have to accept that, in part, it is to ensure that citizens are ready to be intelligent employees. The reading continues, with we may want to think in terms of a well-rounded education for its own sake, but that it needs to include a focus on skills and abilities. These are needed for the next generation to remain competitive in a changing world (Solomon, & Schrum, 2007). The urgency to ensure success in educating our children is vital to the success of our country. At this time we are faced with an economy that is struggling to provide the important resources needed for education. School district budgets are struggling to cover payroll for teachers and many as losing their jobs. This program introduced a number of critical areas needing proper resources to ensure success in implementing technology in the classroom. To compile the newly gained

knowledge, the resources needed, and the economy that should be providing the resources, is a difficult task. The task needs to be addressed in order to improve our schools.

### **Future**

Improving our schools is a topic I am familiar with because of my experience with the business office operations. My experience prior to this program was mainly from a business operations stand point, but is now shared with the instructional side. One of our readings referred to keeping focused on improving educational opportunities for our students. One way to do this is to make improvements with an eye to the future (Harris, Edmonson, & Combs, 2010). I also developed new skills to follow the process designed by Harris, Edmonson and Combs. Those skills include building a foundation, analyzing data, developing a deeper understanding, engaging in self-reflection, exploring patterns, and determining direction toward building a better future for students. Not only can I use the skills at work but also in a personal perspective. This area of the program allowed growth in many areas but pulled together a greater understanding of the overall program.

### **Standards**

The new understanding brought to light a topic of interest to me. This topic was the role of the technology facilitators and leaders in education. Understanding the new arrival of these roles in education is supported by learning the standards. Williamson and Redish summarized the importance of improving the performance of these roles. Also mentioned was the certifications and ongoing professional learning necessary to maintain a prepared workforce. The standards provide a framework to reflect on performance and identify areas where they need professional development. Also provided is the framework for the development and delivery of new inservice professional learning programs for technologists (Williamson & Redish, 2009).

One of my main responsibilities is working with technology leaders and facilitators. I often encounter those with formal training and some who have not attended formal training. I have personally experienced great results with both groups. The desire to succeed in this industry drives many to attain the knowledge needed to be competitive and successful. There are many resources available for those who are self-taught. On the other hand, some attend formal training but do not apply the new techniques at their district. During this program, I feel we were given many resources to use to further our technology expertise. I also feel we were given tools to help us gain the internal drive to provide the best we can as technology leaders of the future. The balance of new knowledge, skills, tools and drive are intricate to being a leader. This program was so very beneficial in this area. It provided not only the course content to support this but embedded the pride to serve as a leader in the success of implementing technology in the educational environment. As an advocate for technology, it was also helpful to be used as a role model and to learn the importance behind serving as one. As we worked through the class work, I learned firsthand about the digital divide and the impact it has on education.

### **Digital Divide**

One of the most important tasks at hand will be to close the digital divide. Bissonette (2009) describes the digital divide as the gap between people with effective access to computers, the Internet, and information technology and those without effective access. The author gives examples of constraints based on geography, poverty and disabilities. There is also the case of filtering software preventing access to the internet (Bissonette, 2009). This area of the program was very informative and made me realize the impact of providing internet access through many diverse conditions. As a technology leader it will be time consuming and costly to work through tough issues. As the issues are resolved, maintaining the law and protecting the students at the

same time will not be an easy task. Even though, I don't feel that I know this area to the depth required. I do feel I know where to go for the resources and the information for decision making then, to be able to gather the resources, software and skills to put the filters in place and govern our internet access successfully. One of the most valuable assets to participating in the program has been the affiliation with a great team of experts. A group that was willing to share, lend a helping hand, listen to complaints and field questions endlessly. Without question, the greatest piece of the entire program was sharing.

### **Share**

Experts in the field of technology leadership are treasured. I feel to gain this status, one must be well rounded and knowledgeable in a number of areas. This program presented several courses that I felt, at first, did not apply to the role of technology leadership. After completing all of the courses and working through the eight standards, I feel differently. During the course that covered school law, I felt disjointed and foreign to the topic. Not being a teacher caused several moments of misunderstandings and disconnect with the topics. I tried to really understand the teacher perspective and the principal role. Applying both of these roles to the weekly assignments helped to align the content of the course with actual school related tasks. During this area of the program, I relied on teacher friends and coworkers to help me understand. All through the program I utilized the videos, web conferences, discussion boards and weekly readings to fast forward my understanding of each course. In the end, it was the sharing and collaboration with colleagues and staff that pulled me through the program. I am eternally grateful to all.

### **The Future**

I feel I have really accomplished so much through the entire program. The hard work is nearing an end and I am feeling somewhat relieved. My initial response to planning for the next three years includes two thoughts. The first is sheer elation at not having an additional responsibility outside of home, church and work. The second is the prospect of retirement in October of 2011. Then, I almost second guessed why I even started the program at this stage of my life. Of course after the whirlwind of thoughts settle, I reflect upon the entire experience and focus on why I started, where I have ended, and what I have gained. The experience of participating in this program is absolutely astounding and I would not change it for anything.

Over the course of the next three years I would like to accomplish several personal and work related goals. The first personal goal is to remain a positive role model for those in my family that need to further their education. I am also actively sharing my experience with coworkers in regards to the online course opportunity. The online capability was a life line for me and will be to others especially during the economic times in education. Another personal goal is to help those in the community understand the need for technology in the classroom. I would like to make certain they understand the importance of placing qualified technology facilitators and leaders on staff at the district. The final personal goal is to maintain the standard of professionalism, work ethic and integrity developed during participating in this program. My professional goals include maintaining a level of expertise in the field of technology. I would like to continue to work towards understanding the role of teachers and principals on the campus level. Also, explore the possibility of gaining a teacher certification in the future. I also would like to commit to staying current with the standards, and follow the future arrival of new technologies.



My single most important goal is to share. To share my experiences during this program, the knowledge I gained, and the people I encountered. One of the greatest possessions someone can have is to experience something that will change you forever. The change is important but the greater importance is to share your experience. I fell in love with a story during one of our readings and I cannot end this experience without sharing. Dana (2009) requests you imagine a large pond that is stagnant. The desire to create a movement or change in the water, calls you near. At the edge of the pond are stones and you pick one up. You toss the stone to the middle of the pond. While the stone was on the ground it had no impact on the water. Once the stone was tossed in the water it disturbs the stillness of the surface. Not only is the surface disturbed, it also emanates ripples from its landing place to the edges of the pond (Dana, 2009). This story single-handedly identifies my entire experience in this program. I am committed not to be a stagnant pond, to be more than a splash, and to emulate the ripple.

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International Society for Technology in Education.

## Appendix

## Curriculum Vitae

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**EDUCATION**

<i>Lamar University, Beaumont, TX</i> <b>M.Ed. in Educational Technology Leadership</b>	<b>2011</b>
<i>Lamar University, Beaumont, TX</i> <b>B.A. in General Studies</b>	<b>2004</b>
<i>East Chambers ISD, Winnie, TX</i> <b>High School</b>	<b>1978</b>

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**MEMBERSHIPS**

Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO)
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**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

East Chambers ISD	1983-1993
Initial position held was bookkeeper in the Business Office. Promoted to systems operator of IBM System 36 for district centralized database. Facilitated the migration of data to Windows based product including all student, business and PEIMS data.	
Region 5 Education Service Center	1993-Current
Initial position held was software interface specialist covering Business applications for operations for two software programs. Promoted to Director of Management Information Systems covering Computer Maintenance, PEIMS processing and submission, Business Initiative and Software Support. Reorganization efforts streamlined processing and the department was divided. Currently serving as the Director of the School Management Software Department. Duties include managing the software support and interfacing for the RSCCC, iTCCS and TxEIS software products. Applications include student, business and PEIMS processing along with Grade Book, Parent Portal, Student Portal and Employee Access. Serving on the following committees: Student Advisory, Business Advisory and Management Committees.	

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**CERTIFICATION**

Certified Texas School Business Official by the Texas Association of School Business Officials Organization
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